Student behaviors, such as involvement in class, the amount of effort expended in curricular activities etc., have been empirically shown to be reliable predictors of academic performance. In Fall 2009, Learning Community instructors rated their students on various behavioral indicators, namely, Class Attendance, Class Participation, Effort, Homework, and Overall Attitude. This research note presents correlation between the Instructors’ ratings on these behavioral indicators and students’ actual course grades and semester GPA.

Table 1 presents data for LC students who were enrolled in paired sections of MTH 003 and SDV 100. Since Learning Communities consist of linked classes – in this case, two classes paired together – the students received a separate grade for each class in the pair. Accordingly, the five behavioral indicators are explored in relation with students’ course grades in SDV as well as MTH sections separately. In addition, the behavioral indicators are also considered in relation with students’ overall semester GPA.

As seen in Table 1 (on the next page), overall, the behavioral indicators showed fairly strong correlations with students’ SDV 100 grade, MTH 003 grade, and semester GPA. Among the various indicators, both SDV grade and semester GPA showed highest correlation with Overall Attitude (0.58 and 0.60, respectively). Math course grade, on the other hand, was more strongly related to the indicators, Effort and Homework (0.62 each).
Besides MTH 003, there were additional Math and non-Math courses taught during Fall 2009 as part of the LC initiative. The data in the following table takes into account all the LC courses (including MTH 003) and presents correlations between the behavioral indicators and the students’ semester GPA for the LC sections taken as a whole.

As can be seen in Table 2, of the five behavioral indicators, student’s semester GPA was most strongly related to Overall Attitude (0.57).

It should be noted that all the correlation coefficients presented in the tables above are statistically significant. In other words, all the five behavioral indicators can serve as meaningful predictors of student success to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the magnitude of the correlation coefficients). Since the student behaviors can be monitored continuously throughout the semester, the performance on the behavioral indicators can be used to identify and alert at-risk students and increase their likelihood of success.

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1 Correlation coefficients range from -1 to 1, ‘0’ indicating no correlation and ‘1’ showing a perfect positive correlation and -1 indicating a perfect negative correlation between the variables under consideration.